

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 6397

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TAGS: PLOS, GR, UR
SUBJ: LOS - ALLEGED GREEK-USSR DIFFERENCES AIRED

REF: A. ATHENS 3425 B. ATHENS 8744 (8/23/76)

1. ONE OF GOG'S PRIMARY CONCERNS ON LOS MATTERS IS THE QUESTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL STATUS OF STRAITS BECAUSE OF THE UNUSUAL SITUATION IN THE AEGEAN WHERE GREEK TERRITORY COMPRISES MORE THAN THREE THOUSAND ISLANDS, ISLETS AND ROCKS,. GREECE'S DESIRE TO MAINTAIN THE FULLEST CONTROL POSSIBLE OVER THE STRAITS LYING BETWEEN HER INSULAR POSSESSIONS IS HEIGHTENED BY THE ON-GOING DISPUTE WITH TURKEY OVER AEGEAN ISSUES.

2. ONE ASPECT OF THIS PARTICULAR QUESTION THAT SURFACES TO PUBLIC ATTENTION FROM TIME TO TIME IS THE ALLEGED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GREECE AND THE LARGE MARITIME POWERS OVER THE STRAITS ISSUE. THE SOVIET UNION, IN PARTICULAR, HAS BEEN PORTRAYED IN THE GREEK MEDIA
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AS OPPOSING RESTRICTIVE MEASURES IN THE AEGEAN--SUCH AS THE EXTENSION BY GREECE OF HER TERRITORIAL SEA FROM THE PRESENT SIX TO TWELVE MILES (THUS REDUCING OR EVEN CLOSING MUCH OF THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL WATERWAYS IN THE AEGEAN) OR RESTRICTING MANY OF THE STRAITS TO "INNOCENT PASSAGE" AS OPPOSED TO "FREE PASSAGE." (IN MAKING THIS GENERAL ARGUMENT, INCIDENTALLY, IT IS OFTEN NOTED THAT THE VIEWS OF THE US COINCIDE WITH THE USSR.) IN FACT, AS WE RE-

PORTED IN REF B, THE SOVIETS TOLD THE GREEKS THE USSR WOULD CONSIDER "HOSTILE" ANY GREEK MEASURE WHICH WOULD INTERFERE WITH FREE NAVIGATION IN THE AEGEAN.

3. SOME MONTHS AGO, REPORTS CIRCULATED THAT A TEAM OF RUSSIAN LOS EXPERTS WOULD BE COMING TO ATHENS FOR CONSULTATIONS PRIOR TO THE CURRENT LOS SESSION IN NEW YORK. TIME PASSED AND THE RUSSIANS FAILED TO APPEAR. LATE LAST WEEK SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS CARRIED A STORY ALONG THE LINES THAT THE RUSSIAN DELEGATION HAD CANCELLED ITS TRIP BECAUSE OF THE SHARP DIFFERENCES WITH GREECE OVER THESE LOS ISSUES. MOST VERSIONS REPORTED THAT DURING THE VISIT TO ATHENS IN APRIL BY A RANKING SOVIET MFA OFFICIAL (REF A), HE HAD USED THE OCCASION TO DRIVE HOME THE RUSSIAN POINTS. THE REPORTS INDICATED PARENTHETICALLY THAT THE US SHARED THESE PARTICULAR SOVIET VIEWS.

4. IN RESPONSE, OVER THE PAST WEEKEND AN "AUTHORITATIVE (GOG) SOURCE" STATED THAT THE MEDIA ACCOUNTS WERE UNFOUNDED, AND HE DENIED THAT ANY DISAGREEMENT ON LOS ISSUES EXISTED BETWEEN GREECE AND THE USSR. THE "AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE" POINTED OUT THAT THE GREEK AND SOVIET DELEGATIONS HAD BEEN ABLE TO CONSULT DURING THE LOS NEGOTIATIONS. HE ADDED, MOREOVER, THAT THE RUSSIANS AND "OTHER POWERS" DO NOT OPPOSE GREECE'S EXTENDING ITS TERRITORIAL SEA FROM SIX TO TWELVE MILES SO LONG AS THE PRINCIPLE OF "FREE PASSAGE" IS ENSURED.

5. COMMENT: THAT THE MEDIA ON OCCASION RESURRECTS THIS STORY--WHICH
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IN EFFECT CASTIGATES THE USSR FOR ALLEGED POSITIONS THAT OPPOSE FULL RECOGNITION OF GREEK RIGHTS IN THOSE MANY STRAITS OF THE AEGEAN --MAY REFLECT THE UNDERLYING FEELING IN AT LEAST SOME CIRCLES OF GREEK SOCIETY THAT THE USSR IS MORE FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARDS RIVAL TURKEY THAN TOWARDS GREECE. NEVERTHELESS, THE GOG HAS BEEN VERY CIRCUMSPECT IN ITS OFFICIAL PRONOUNCEMENTS ON THE QUESTION OF THE STATUS OF THE STRAITS, AND, AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, HAS NOT MADE ANY PUBLIC DECLARATION ON THE DELICATE ISSUE OF THE POSSIBLE EXTENSION OF THE GREEK TERRITORIAL SEA FROM SIX TO TWELVE MILES. AS TO WHY THE SOVIET LOS DELEGATION DID NOT COME TO ATHENS AS ANTICIPATED, A GREEK MFA OFFICIAL TOLD US SIMPLY THAT THE RUSSIANS HAD CANCELLED BECAUSE THE US EXPERTS HAD GONE TO MOSCOW AT APPROXIMATELY THE TIME ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR THE CONSULTATIONS, THUS PREEMPTING THE GREEKS. THEREFORE, THE GREEKS AGREED IT WOULD BE EASIER TO HAVE THE CONTACT TAKE PLACE IN NEW YORK.
KUBISCH

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